

THE INSTITUTE OF BEASTS

'The advance of knowledge deludes us into thinking we are different from other animals, but our history shows that we are not.'

John Gray, Straw Dogs

'Single mindedness condemns the mind to monomania.'

Marcel Broodthaers



Sleeping hamster. Photograph. Dimensions variable. 2008

The collaborative work of Dutton and Swindells can be seen in the context of post-conceptual artistic practices which play with and interrogate images, objects and texts through processes of collage, appropriation and multiple association. The aim of the collaboration is to foster complex interpretations, often from deceptively simple means; consciously working through varied rhetorical devices and tropes, modes of production and strategic interventions. We are tactical artists, preferring to focus on strategies, context and processes, frequently doubling, collaging, reversing, repeating and inverting images, objects and texts.



Lovebirds (double) 2008

2 identical photographs 32cm x 21.42

Two identical framed photographs of two identical love birds, inverted.

We are interested in the bond between photographs, or more precisely the bond between images which makes them inseparable. The act of inversion helps us to understand the image as something different than a photographic representation of love birds.

For the Ssamzie residency we founded *The Institute of Beasts*. We liken this institute to a cross between a zoo and an academy. The aim of our *Institute* is to allow us to accommodate an increasing number of errant aesthetic strategies and models of practice developed both prior to and during the residency period. (The concept of errancy is here acknowledged as a pathology that seeks to create the conditions for an encounter not dissimilar to unexpectedly coming across a deer whilst walking off the path in a forest).



lovebirds 2007-2008

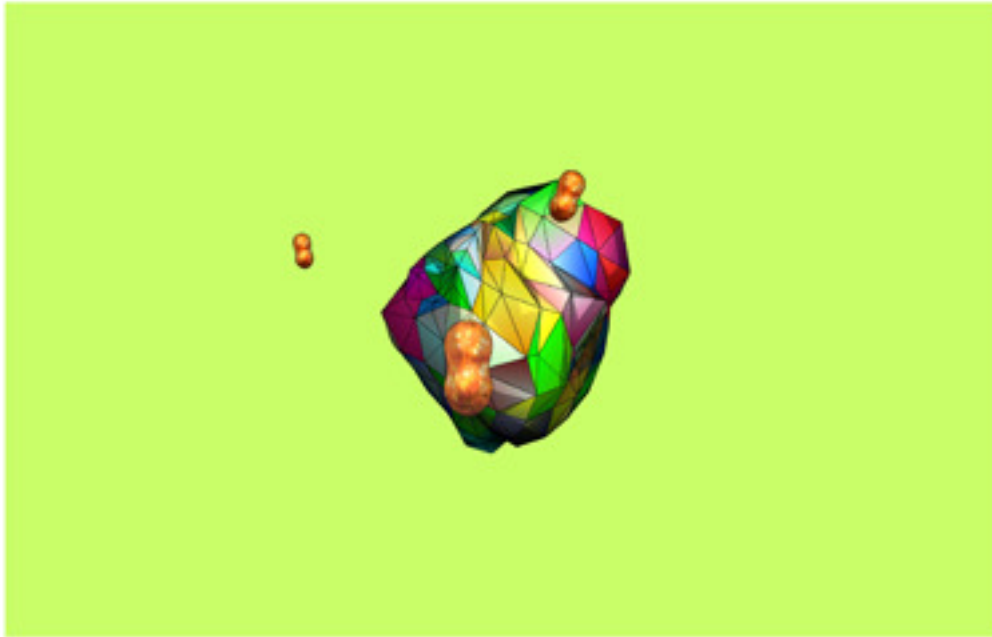
laser cut Perspex, two love birds, cage, flash animation on monitor, sound, m.d.f. platform.

In some of our recent work we have introduced live animals into the art making process. For example we have made work from chasing rabbits in car headlights on night time country roads, made an installation of chicken hutches out of 'out of date' art and made large scale photographs of animals let loose in the gallery/studio.

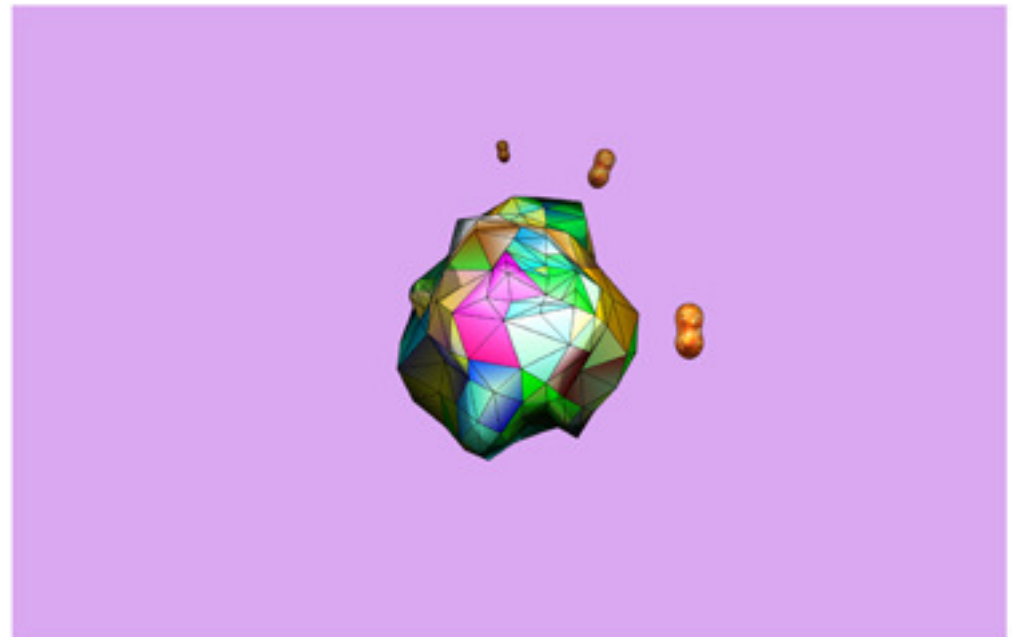
We have tried to extend this process at Ssamzie and have produced a number of works where an animal figures strongly. We have found that an interesting aspect of having an animal in the studio is the question of what happens to the art when it becomes a perch, or a hutch, or a den, which of course also provokes some questions about the human animal.

The platform or mat for the birdcage is made from a drawing quoting the infamous Symbionese Liberation Army (the S.L.A) revolutionary slogan, then cut out of perspex. We also used this slogan for the basis of a sound work being played in the main gallery.

The slogan, "Death to the Fascist Insect that preys on the life of the people", really grabbed us, in the sense that, despite its clear and genuinely repellent terror credentials, the fact remained that it's revolutionary rhetoric was somehow compelling, and ultimately, rhetoric, be it revolutionary, political, cultural or otherwise is our meat and drink. If our rendering of it in perspex is self consciously a little bit hapless and decorative, it's a way of trying to negotiate the confused sentiments of the text.



Heads will Turn
Flash animation



The work is partnered in the gallery with a flash animation. It shows a slowly revolving multi-faceted and multi-coloured 'head' on a field of a subtly changing spectrum of colours whilst being orbited by three spinning peanut-like satellites. The animation is accompanied by the sound of what initially sounds like bird song but is actually the script of 'The Exorcist', read by a computerized voice then speeded up by around 2000 times to sound like the high pitch twitter of birds. In the film William Friedkin used the sound of the animal on a number of occasions to signify the demon 'Pazuzu', as well as using the revolving head scene and other devices of inversion, he reverses animal sounds to signify all that may be unthinkable. In a way of trying to wrench the script back from this negative image of the bestial we had the script read by a computer simulated voice and then speeded it up until it sounded birdlike, so much so that we found the love birds were more often than not, responding.

What we found interesting about this work was the quite complex nuances between the animal and the digital, both in a formal sense and in an ontological sense.



Monkey nuts 2008

Studio 402

Laser cut plywood, m.d.f. supporting ceramic objects.

Wood base 1m x 15cm x 15cm

Ceramics approx. 30cm x 15cm each

We had been thinking about the idea of making some ceramic 'peanuts' for some time but somehow the context had never felt right until now.

We rather like the fact that these ceramics are ridiculous objects which seek to recognize the humble peanut as something quite decorative and special. The 'nuts' themselves we see as incongruous objects which we nevertheless genuinely want to venerate, which we did by allowing some sense of decoration in via the frame and the glaze.

The 'Monkey nut' (as we call them in the U.K.) is a great leveller. Try breaking one open and eating it without feeling a little bit more Simian than normal. We had also been thinking about how these objects would be seen if they were ever made. Originally we were imagining them sitting on a shelf in a very domestic environment, but that soon became more of a 'platform', within a gallery setting.

death to the fascist insect

♩ - 120 Electric Piano Dutton and Swindells

The musical score is written for electric piano in 4/4 time with a tempo of 120 beats per minute. It consists of five systems of staves. The first system shows measures 1-3, the second measures 4-6, the third measures 7-9, the fourth measures 10-11, and the fifth measures 12-13. The notation includes various chords, arpeggios, and melodic lines in both the treble and bass clefs. Measure numbers 1, 4, 7, 10, and 12 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb).



Death to the fascist insect that preys on the life of the people 2008
drawing and 7 mins 33secs sound work

“Death to the fascist insect that preys on the life of the people” was the revolutionary slogan of the infamous Symbionese Liberation Army who kidnapped the heiress Patty Hearst in 1974. A number of our pieces make reference to this text. We were also thinking about idea of revolutionary rhetoric when we heard that Patty Hearst (the heiress and former SLA kidnap victim, turned urban guerilla) was known to be displaying her pedigree french bulldog in a dog show in Harrogate U.K. in early 2008. Something of the inflammation and subsequent collapse of revolutionary sentiment seemed poignant.

This sound work is made via the ubiquitous and rather wonderful Mac Garageband software. We have taken the SLA slogan and rendered it into a ‘code’ which can be placed into the grid template of the software, effectively giving us a musical (we use the term lightly) template around which we were able to further construct something.

Interestingly, as the work developed we started to notice all kinds of little sparks of superficial resemblances to ‘serious’ ‘modern’ music and the avant garde, as well as along with a more free form jazz sound from the 50 s and 60’s.

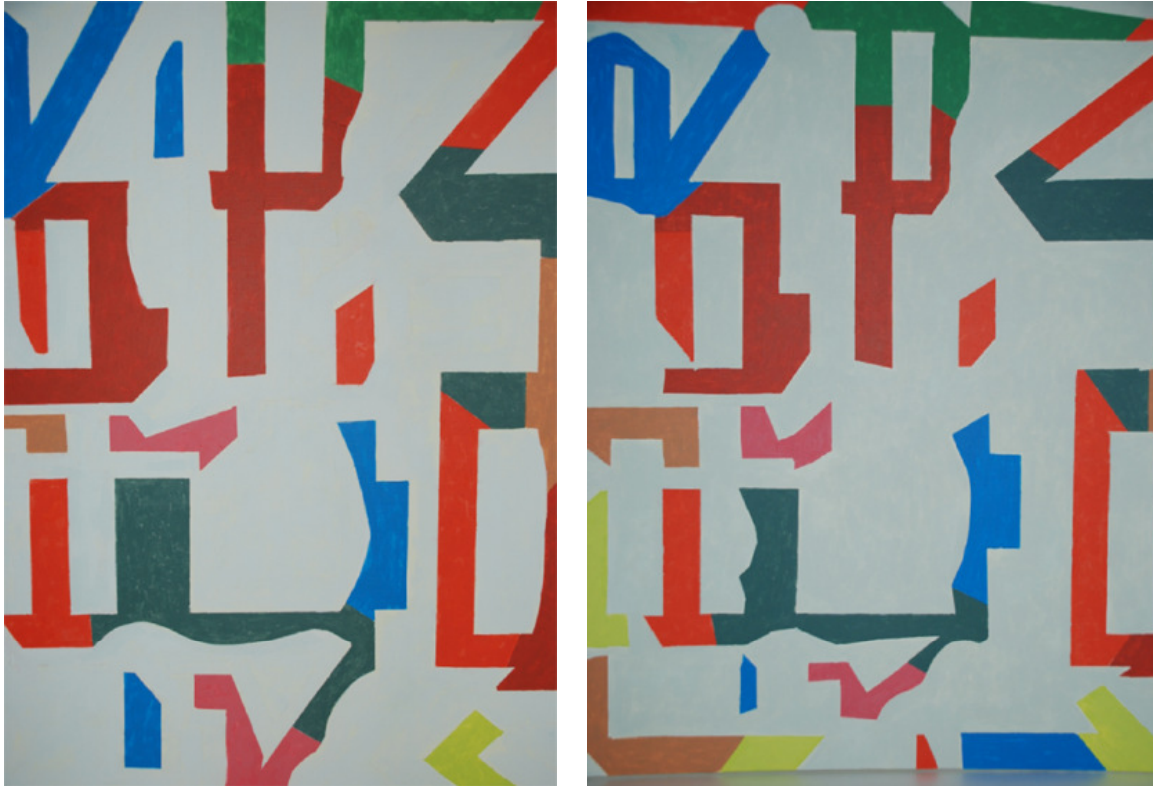
Trying to develop a sense of this poetic and somewhat far fetched synaptic leap between the utopian and progressive aspirations of high modernity, the fervor and will of the revolutionary statement and its subsequent disastrous consequences and collapse helped us to give a sensibility to the piece.



Association 2008
Flash animation on wall based monitor

When we first arrived in Ssamzie we were keen to get working but an empty studio is tricky place to start. One of the first things we did was a series of 'performances' in which we played out various personae, simply to break the ice. Although often deeply embarrassing and on rare occasions, very funny, (to us) it was not the stuff we wanted to make as art (at least at that point). In a similar vein we then tried some free association exercises. Free association, or psychodynamic theory, is a technique used in psychology, in which patients are asked to continually relate anything which comes into their minds, regardless of how superficially unimportant or potentially embarrassing the memory threatens to be. This technique assumes that all memories are arranged in a single associative network, and that sooner or later the subject will stumble across a crucial memory.

In complete contrast to the *raison d'être* of free association we have taken away any hope of anything being 'revealed' by re-mixing the responses back into a soup of what once again appear to be random connections. We like to think that our usual process of producing 'something from nothing' in this case has been turned round, enabling is to produce a 'nothing' from a 'something' which is simply too revealing to relate



lovebird painting 2008
diptych.
Each panel 60cm x 46cm

Another of our first attempts in the studio was to make a large wall text painting. Although it stayed with us for most of the residency it was never going to be a work in itself, it was more of a limbering up process. However, we isolated a section of it and painted the same section twice on canvas. We imagine that the paintings were like two love birds, it was inconceivable that they could be split up.



Lovebirds (double) 20
2 identical photographs 32cm x 21.42

Two identical framed photographs of two identical love birds, inverted.

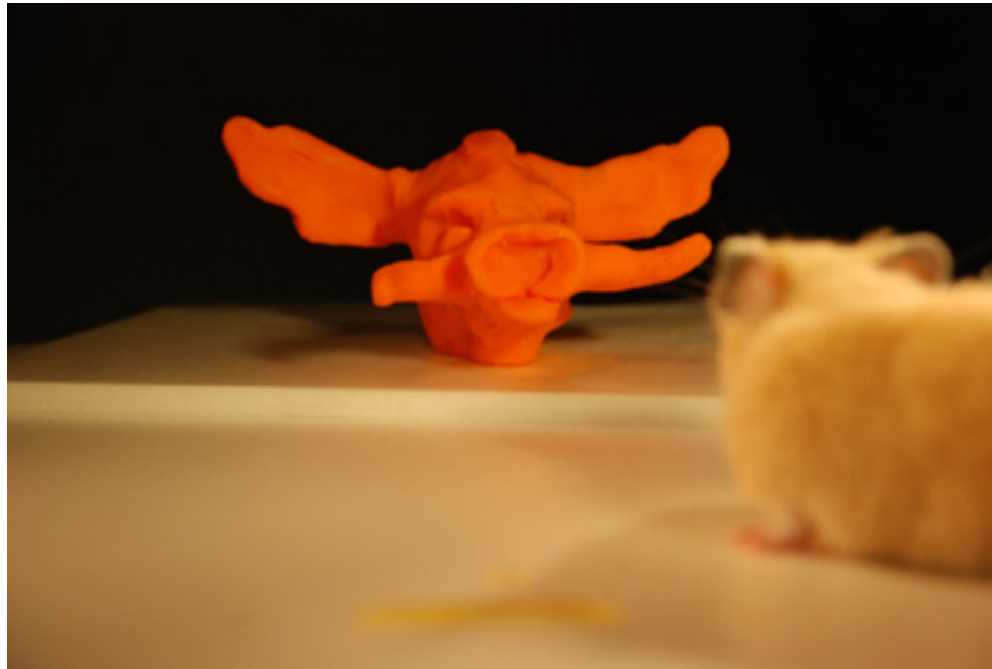
What we are interested in here is the bond between photographs, or more precisely the bond between images which makes them inseparable. The act of inversion helps us to understand the image as something different than a photographic representation of love birds.



nolens/volens-willing/unwilling 2008
neon sign/straw

from Latin, nolens, means 'not willing', volens means 'willing'.

The two signs flash on and off and are lying in a bed of straw under the desk in the studio. We were thinking in particular of being dragged willing or unwilling into the future, and also that the words themselves may be ambivalent about coming into the open.



Dutton and Swindells can be contacted via Ssamzie Space or at;

Duttsville@blueyonder.co.uk

And

S.P.Swindells@hud.ac.uk

00 44 (0)114 2211763

or

00 44 (0)114 2364089

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone at Ssamzie Space for their wonderful support, all at 'Strange Fruit', 'Sultans' and 'Kim's' for their tolerance and warm welcome, Yoone for her patience, and special thanks to the Kookmin University connection, Bo-Young, Eunseon, Ji-Yeun and Prof. Kwon for everything.

We also gratefully acknowledge the support of ;

Coventry University, UK
The University of Huddersfield, UK
The Arts Council of England

